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at York: From the latter I have recently obtained some interesting documents, which in their proper place I shall communicate. I shall afterwards endeavour to procure what information I may be able, respecting the foreign lunatic asylums. I do not know any work that brings the interior of our modern madhouses, and the treatment of the lunatics completely before the view.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON IGNORANCE.

"But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.
"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

GRAY.

IT has been alleged by the *Darkeners*, or the advocates for keeping the poorer classes in ignorance, that by such privation they are in a more submissive state, and can be more easily governed. Probably the reverse of this statement is the truth. Ignorance produces suspicion, and an ignorant person from not knowing his rights and his duties is always dangerous. From not possessing the opportunities of accurate examination, he often expects too much, and is inclined to grasp at more than is his due share. He is suspicious and jealous. A person conversant with the uninformed classes must often have noticed the exaggerations caused by their fears, their frequent apprehensions of mischief being intended, when none is really designed, and especially their distortions of the news of the day, by which dangers are always magnified. A story receives additions in its carriage, and he who only receives his information or forms his ideas at second hand, as is the case with the illiterate, must necessarily be imperfect in forming his conclusions and deductions. The man who cannot

read, labours under so many disadvantages, that with the same capacity, he is greatly inferior to his neighbour, who has the advantage of being able to read. Reading induces, to a certain degree, habits of reflection; he does not receive altogether so implicitly, he uses his eyes as well as his ears, and has an additional means of acquiring useful knowledge; and according to Bacon, knowledge is power. It supplies faculties, which serve as the introduction of mental eyesight, and no longer,

"Is wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

Relaxation and variety are necessary to the human mind; the rich require exercise to remove their ennui, the sedentary scholar stands equally in need of bodily motion to diversify his pursuits, and give relief to his fatigued mind; and the hard-working and toil-worn artisan and labourer, would at the same time, receive rest to his body, and information to his mind, by the relaxation of a little reading suited to his capacity. Let us figure to ourselves the English mechanic spending his earnings from his family in the evenings, at the noisy ale-house, intent all day on forming the head of a pin, or attending solely to his spindle, till he becomes almost completely identified with the machinery, and is a machine himself.—Incapable of ideas, he guzzles his beer, and makes up for his want of sense, by the loudness of his vociferations, and the brutal roughness of his manners. Let us next behold the Irish workman, maddening under the influence of his favourite whiskey, spending his leisure on Sundays, and misnamed *holy days*, at hurling and those violent exercises, more laborious than his common employment, and which by their violence tend to raise the passions, till he foolishly supposes that a broken head, and an almost fractured skull are proofs of virtuous exertion, and true courage. Such a picture is often realized in the South, while in the North, we have much drunkenness at fairs and markets, the bane of our morals and the disgrace of our country. With these let us contrast the Scotch peasant,

with a moderate portion of school learning, enjoying his evenings in quiet, and with a neverfailing source of enjoyment, in reading the useful books which the subscription library, of which he is a member, furnishes him. This is no ideal creation of imagination. The reality may be found at an extensive cotton manufactory at Rothsay in the isle of Bute, and at Glasgow in the mechanics attending a lecture given gratis once a week, at Anderson's institution, on subjects connected with their employments. I only mention these two instances as immediately occurring to my recollection. Were I more intimately acquainted with Scotland, I could doubtless support my argument by innumerable other instances.

Much praise is due to Samuel Whitbread for his attempt to introduce a more enlarged system of education into England. I trust his exertions though at present opposed by narrow minded and illiberal men, will be ultimately crowned with success, and surmount all opposition, and that Sir John Newport or some other truly patriotic and enlightened Irishman, will seek to confer a similar benefit on this country.

When the day comes that governments will attend to the public good in preference to their own selfish interests, and employ their energies, not for the destruction, but the advantage of the people, then will the subject of education obtain one of the first places in their view. Then will the funds now lavished to corrupt the people, and promote the shocking system of wars, for the purposes of ambition and tyranny, be turned into the beneficial channels of promoting education.

But even if more enlightened views prevailed, we cannot look for fruits on a sudden. Deep-rooted evils can only be eradicated through a long continued process, and book learning, although valuable as a means to an end, can operate only by preparing the ground for receiving the seeds or germ of future improvement. In the course of receiving learning, a few might become pedants, and be spoiled for the plough and the loom,

without acquiring any thing to compensate for the loss, but these would only be exceptions to the general rule, and in time a rich crop might be expected from so good a preparation, provided pains were continually taken to pull up the weeds whenever they made their appearance. Prejudices would be gradually eradicated, and habits of industry, frugality, and well disciplined virtue, would supersede jealousies, suspicion, drunkenness and the innumerable evils which follow in the train of ignorance.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic, may be compared to the highroads opened through a country, which facilitate communication, and remove obstructions. They are valuable in themselves, but still more so, for the lasting good effects they produce, by preparing the way, and facilitating the progress of self-improvement, and self-instruction, those two great inlets to true wisdom.

School knowledge can by no means be relied on, as if every valuable acquisition were obtained through that medium. Cowper points out the just distinction between this kind of superficial knowledge, and true wisdom.

"Knowledge dwells

In heads replete with thoughts of other
men,

Wisdom in minds attentive to their
own;

Knowledge a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom
builds.

It is necessary to consider instruction in this comprehensive view, as well that we may form adequate ideas of its importance, as that we may not be mistaken in the expectations we form from it, as to the effects produced from a superficial system, or to what might by an enlarged liberal plan, be effected. It is of more importance to teach how to think, than what to think, and this maxim is true with regard to the poor, as well as the rich. But such doctrine will not be agreeable to those who wish to mould opinions according to their own fancies, or seek to monopolize the rights of judgment. Statesmen are mistaken if they suppose ignorance is tractable; nothing can be more obstinate. The mule is

not more stubborn than the ignorant opinionated man. Rulers egregiously mistake their interests when they seek to keep the people in ignorance. Indeed if they have designs inimical to the public welfare, they may wish to encourage ignorance, that it may prevent the people from penetrating their schemes, but the honest statesman has nothing to conceal, and holds no connexion with mystery. Concealment almost always is a cover for interested motives. I was once present at a conversation between a landlord of a little island on the coast of Ireland, and the catholic clergyman of the parish. They both reprobated the plan of giving instruction to the poor, the one thinking to continue more firmly his own authority and the authority of the state over them, and the latter his religious influence. They sought different ends by the same means. But the landlord at least was mistaken, for a short time afterwards, on the breaking out of the disturbances in 1798, he for a time was forced to fly from his island or petty kingdom, and found that ignorance had no tendency to promote obedience. If we may venture to advert to the unhappy transactions of those days, and walk over the embers, not yet altogether extinguished, we may ask, did not ignorance add much to the ferocities with which both parties conducted themselves;—for in an impartial review of those distressing times, both sides must be blamed. Ignorance nourished the prejudices which aggravated the horrors of that day, and steeled the breasts of the contending parties; and for the removal of those prejudices we can only look to the gradual, though slow, but sure progress of education through successive years. Enlarged sentiments of mutual forbearance will not be the work of a day, there must be time for healing the breaches.

Erasmus wrote ironically in praise of folly; many gravely, with great absurdity, plead for keeping the people ignorant, that they may be submissive. The true friend of man pleads for the benefits of education to ameliorate and soften the mind of man, and to advance the improvement and happiness of the human race. When

a people are oppressed by ignorance and misrule, they acquire the habits of concealing their sentiments, and veiling their thoughts under the mask of obsequiousness. Thus is superinduced on the Irish peasant in the South, and West, and middle of Ireland, the character of cringing by day, when they meet those whom they consider as their superiors, and of outrage by night.

Sturdy independence is better than hypocritical servility. Teach men both their duties and their rights, that the one may attemper the other, and if even too much roughness should at times appear, it is preferable to servility, which seeks compensation for its apparent suppleness, by a contrary conduct when it can be shown with impunity. If the inhabitants of the south of Ireland, who consider themselves of the higher ranks, would abate of their supercilious treatment towards those they call inferiors, and if undue restrictions were removed, and education suffered to do its proper office, we should no longer hear of midnight plots; white boys, right boys, caravats, and shanavasts, would lay aside their hostilities, and a disciplined band of Lancaster's schoolmasters, would be more effectual to allay animosities, than ten thousand men arrayed in all the weapons of war.

K.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

AN EPISTLE TO DOCTOR FELL.

I CANNOT help taking notice that my aunt has been writing a panegyric upon a female friend, and entirely overlooks me; this I think not quite civil, and I propose therefore undertaking a slight sketch of myself, in order to spare her or others the trouble. But that I may not herein incur the censure of vanity, give me leave to observe, that if I am my own Biographer, it is no more than several heroes, statesmen, and bards, have been before me, and as they wisely thought, so think I, that it is the same thing, nay much more honest, than to employ a hireling, or a parasite, to do it for us: in this case I refer myself to friend Kendal, a good judge in these matters, whether